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SUBJECT: DAS DUDDY AND ST. VINCENT PM GONSALVES DISCUSS
CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE

REF: BRIDGETOWN 739

Classified By: CDA Mary Ellen T. Gilroy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Deputy Assistant Secretary Patrick Duddy met with St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves on June 11 in preparation for the Conference on the Caribbean to be held in Washington later this month. Specifically, DAS Duddy and PM Gonsalves focused on the Conference as an opportunity for the United States and the Caribbean to move past historical disagreements toward a stronger regional partnership. END SUMMARY.

MOVING FORWARD AS PARTNERS

12. (C) In their June 11 meeting, DAS Duddy and PM Gonsalves discussed the June 19-21 Conference on the Caribbean and its goal of strengthening the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The two officials agreed on the importance of the relationship developing into a partnership between the United States and the subregion. PM Gonsalves acknowledged that the United States is clearly the "dominant partner," but that the Caribbean should not be treated as an "inferior or subordinate partner." DAS Duddy explained that an essential aim of transformational diplomacy is to strengthen partnerships in an increasingly globalized world, with the United States focusing on healthy dialogue with healthy democracies. Placing this in context of the Caribbean Conference, DAS Duddy and PM Gonsalves agreed that the upcoming Conference is a chance to move forward past historical differences between the Caribbean and the United States. PM Gonsalves stated that he hopes the Conference will not be viewed merely as an event, but rather as a new beginning of a stronger partnership process.

KEEPING THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT FOCUSED

13. (C) PM Gonsalves and DAS Duddy agreed that the upcoming meeting between President Bush and the CARICOM Heads of Government should be a discussion of the future U.S.-CARICOM relationship. PM Gonsalves expressed the hope that the CARICOM Heads meeting with the President would not inappropriately focus on a laundry list of issues. He would rather have this meeting be a key stage in the process of

moving forward. (Note: St. Vincent Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sir Louis Straker, told the DCM that the CARICOM version of the agenda was too crowded and needed to be revised. However, Barbados MFA Permanent Secretary Teresa Marshall told the DCM that the St. Vincent Ambassador to Washington wished to retain the laundry list of issues rather than move to the narrower agenda to which the CARICOM foreign ministers agreed (reftel). End Note.) DAS Duddy urged PM Gonsalves to use his role as CARICOM Chair to advance a focused agenda for the dialogue rather than letting it get bogged down in past disagreements. PM Gonsalves also expressed hope that the meeting with the President would not focus on the subregion's ties with Venezuela and Cuba. DAS Duddy responded that the United States views the Conference as an opportunity to move U.S.-CARICOM agenda forward. (Note: DAS Duddy also suggested that PM Gonsalves examine the CAFCI II report on Cuba, which he suggested had not always been fully represented in regional media. End Note.) DAS Duddy, in turn, stressed the importance of continuing CARICOM cooperation in Haiti.

AREAS OF COOPERATION, AND SOME ASSISTANCE

¶4. (SBU) PM Gonsalves and DAS Duddy also discussed potential future areas of cooperation between the United States and CARICOM. PM Gonsalves specified that CARICOM nations are most interested in disaster preparedness and response, as well as education and health. DAS Duddy briefed PM Gonsalves on the two pillars for the region: 1) investing in people, including through education; and 2) supporting economic growth and assisting with regional integration. DAS Duddy also mentioned biofuels cooperation and the revival of the Caribbean Trade and Investment Council as important recent developments.

¶5. (C) PM Gonsalves expressed appreciation for the U.S. assistance the region receives, but said that the Caribbean countries would need more assistance to make the transition into modern, competitive, post-colonial economies. PM Gonsalves argued that the more "blessed" party in a partnership is obligated to be more generous. More generally, however, PM Gonsalves stressed the importance of education and fair trade that incorporates allowances for the asymmetries of the region's relationship with the United States.

COMMENT: EVER THE PRAGMATIST

¶6. (C) In his conversation with DAS Duddy, PM Gonsalves (a professed friend of both Castro and Chavez) perfectly aligned himself with the U.S. message -- a forward-looking partnership, a simplified agenda between President Bush and the CARICOM heads of government, and the need to invest in people and the economy. If he carries this pragmatic approach into the meeting with the President, he may prove an effective chair and keep his CARICOM colleagues on track. However, his repeated references to assistance suggest he will press for concrete deliverables given an opportunity to do so.

¶7. (U) DAS Duddy cleared this cable before departing Post.
GILROY